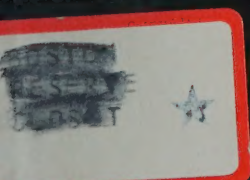
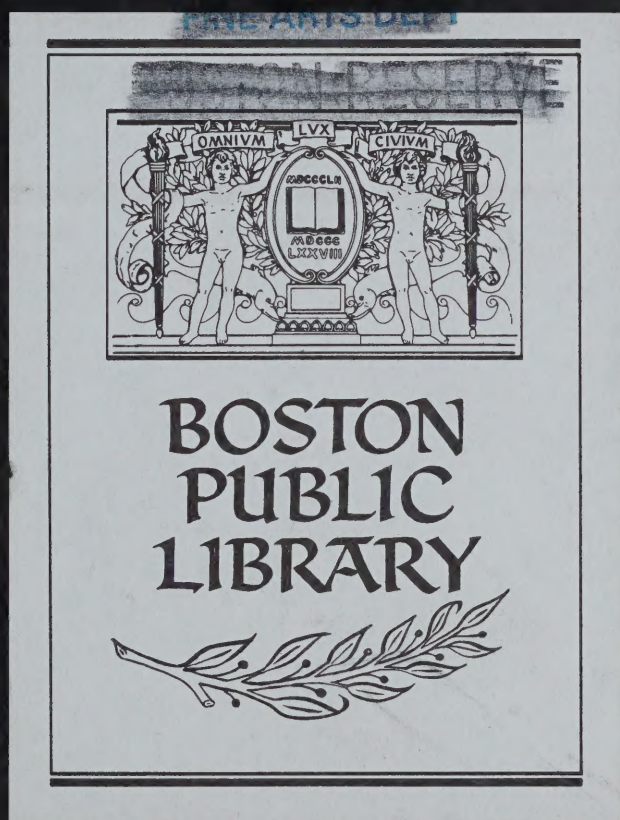


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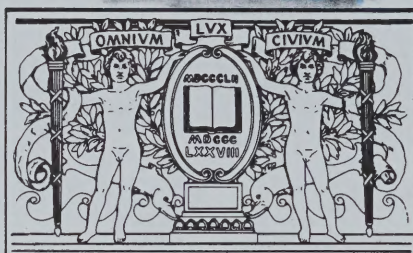


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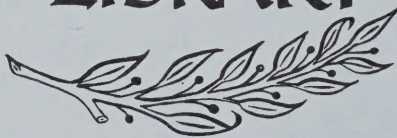


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THE COLONIAL THEATRE

Boston Landmarks Commission
Environment Department
City of Boston

FINE ARTS DEPT

CITY OF BOSTON
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ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT
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Report of the Boston Landmarks Commission

on the Potential Designation of the

THE COLONIAL THEATER

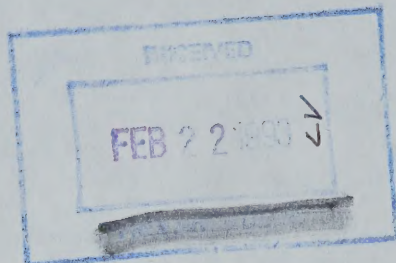
Interior

as a Landmark

under Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975, as amended.

Approved By Judith B. McDonough June 5, 1990
Executive Director Date

Approved By Alan Schwartz 6.5.90
Chairman Date



~~FINE ARTS~~

~~Box Room Closet~~

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- 1.0 Location of the Property
- 2.0 Description of the Property
- 3.0 Significance of the Property
- 4.0 Economic Status
- 5.0 Planning Context
- 6.0 Alternative Approaches
- 7.0 Recommendations
- 8.0 General Standards and Criteria
- 9.0 Specific Standards and Criteria
- 10.0 Footnotes and Bibliography

1.1 Introduction to the subject

1.2 Basic concepts of the subject

1.3 Mathematical background

1.4 Physical background

1.5 Planning and design

1.6 Laboratory work

1.7 Research methods

1.8 General standards and criteria

1.9 Specific standards and criteria

1.10 References and notes

1.0 LOCATION OF THE PROPERTY

1.1 Address and Assessor's Parcel Number:

The address of the Colonial Theater is 106 Boylston Street. It is in Ward 5, Precinct 1. The assessor's parcel number is 45.

1.2 Area in Which the Property is Located:

The Colonial Theater is located in downtown Boston near the corner of Tremont and Boylston Streets across from the Boston Common and the Boylston Street Green Line MBTA Station. The area is considered the Midtown Cultural District and includes the Theater District, the retail shopping area, and Chinatown.

The Colonial is located within a ten-story Renaissance Revival granite office building which abuts late 19th and early 20th century office buildings on either side and has a rear secondary facade and service entrance off Allen's Alley. The building is part of the Piano Row National Register District, which is an ensemble of architecturally notable structures extending along Boylston Street from Charles Street to the corner of Tremont and one block north on Tremont to Avery Street. The district is named Piano Row because of the concentration of music related businesses that were located here during the early years of the 20th century.

The Colonial is one of several distinctive ten-story "early skyscrapers" which create a focal point at the corner of Tremont and Boylston Streets. The other buildings anchoring this corner include the Gothic Revival cast concrete Little Building (1917), the brick Jacobethan-style Hotel Touraine (1897), and the granite Renaissance Revival Masonic Temple (1897). Other buildings along Piano Row are generally four to six stories and are constructed in a variety of late 19th and early 20th century styles and a variety of materials including stone, brick, terra cotta and cast stone. The ground floors are generally occupied by retail stores, and the upper floors by offices.

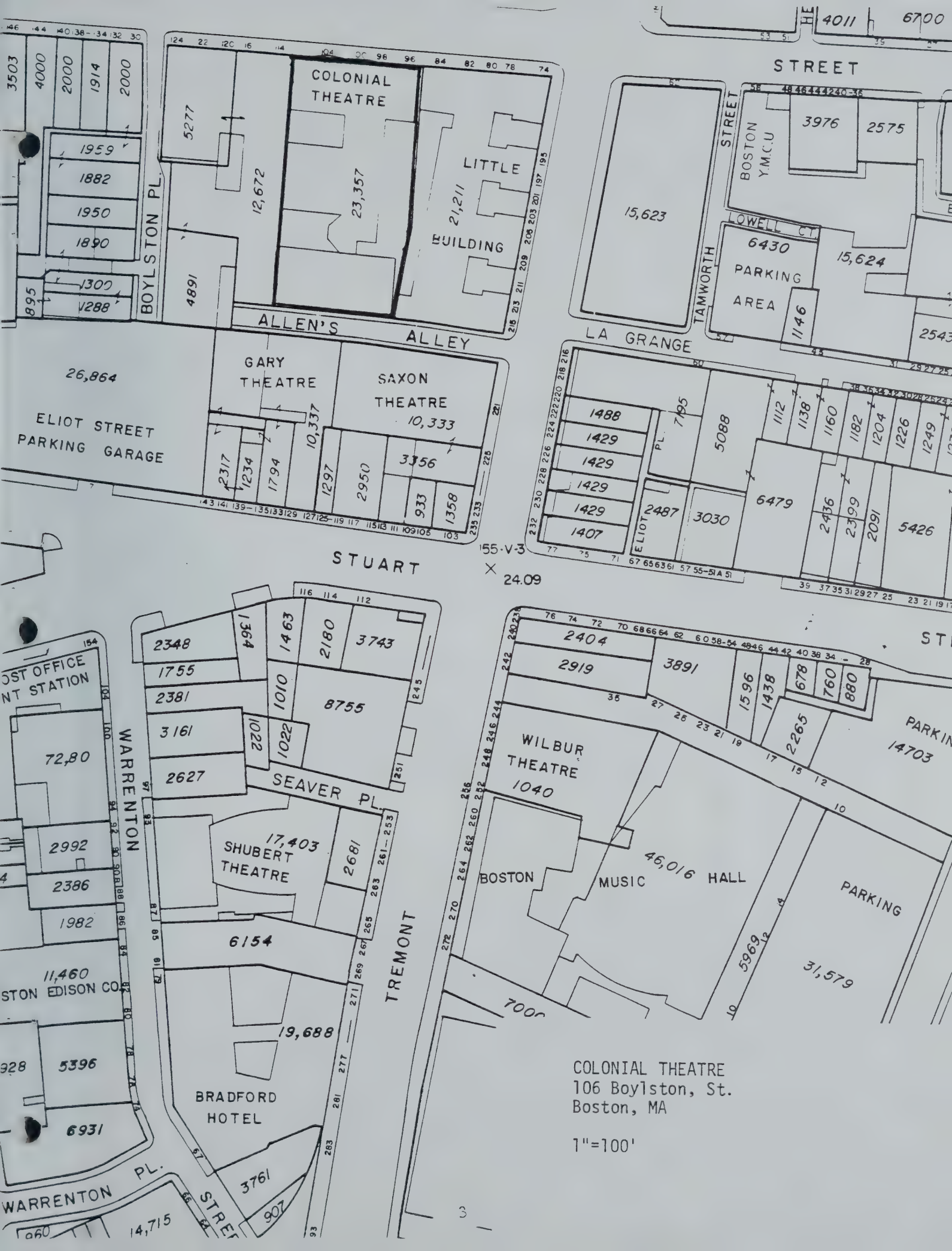
Within two blocks of the Colonial along Tremont Street are other major theaters -- the Wilbur, the Wang Center and the Shubert -- as well as the Emerson Majestic Playhouse. The State Transportation Building is within the block.

1.3 Map Showing Location:

Attached



COLONIAL THEATRE
106 Boylston St.
Boston, MA



STREET

COLONIAL THEATRE

LITTLE

BUILDING

ALLEN'S

ALLEY

GARY THEATRE

SAXON THEATRE

ELIOT STREET PARKING GARAGE

LA GRANGE

STUART

24.09

POST OFFICE
STATION

WARRENTON

SEAVER PL.

TREMONT

SHUBERT THEATRE

WILBUR THEATRE

BOSTON MUSIC HALL

BRADFORD HOTEL

PARKING

COLONIAL THEATRE
106 Boylston, St.
Boston, MA

1"=100'

2.0 DESCRIPTION

2.1 Type and Use

The Colonial Theater is a 1,650-seat playhouse located within a ten-story turn-of-the-century office building. The theater has been used for live stage productions throughout its history.

2.2 Physical Description

Exterior

The exterior of the Colonial Building will be described only briefly, since only the interior is recommended for landmark designation.

The theater is housed in a handsome ten-story Renaissance Revival office building constructed in 1900. The flat-roofed, steel-frame structure measures 107 feet wide and 210 feet deep and conforms to the turn-of-the-century height limit of 125 feet. The building entirely covers the 23,257 square foot lot. The principal (Boylston Street) facade is ten bays wide and is constructed of Milford pink granite. The elevated ground level has a center entrance portal flanked by a storefront and main theater entrance at offset right. The theater entrance at #106 is marked by a slightly projecting marquee which replaced the original iron and glass version.

The three-story base of the building is set off from the shaft by stone cornices and the use of varied Renaissance Revival window treatments. The shaft extends from level four to eight and is distinguished by the banded rustication and regular fenestration pattern. The building is capped by a colonade of two-story engaged Corinthian columns at levels 9-10, followed by a granite modillion cornice.

Interior

Vestibules

The Colonial Theater has a "Louis XV" rococo interior notable for its rich surface decoration and brilliant color effects. Fine craftsmanship is evident in the heavily ornamented carved surfaces, in the gilded plaster work, and in the painted murals which make the theater particularly notable. The public spaces include a vestibule, lobby, 1,650-seat auditorium, and several lounges -- all generous but not extravagant in size. The interior, which was sensitively restored in 1960, is virtually intact and in excellent condition throughout.

The theater entrance at right bay of the Colonial Building is marked by a slightly projecting pressed metal marquee of

recent vintage, with a palmette border along the top and bottom edge. Original bronze rococo-style poster display cases on either side of the entrance are crowned by lion heads. The five doors leading into the theater are the originals, constructed of wood and glass with simple brass handles. Above are five square leaded windows with lyre designs in wine red and clear glass.

A smaller outer vestibule just inside the doors has walls of polished pink veined marble with a black marble baseboard and a Greek wave band terminating the wainscotting about two-thirds of the way up the wall. Lyre motifs are painted along the upper walls. The ceiling is unadorned and the floor is covered by modern rubber matting. Leading into the main vestibule are three sets of wooden double doors separated by carved fluted Ionic columns which support semi-circular arches above each door.

The main vestibule is a long, narrow one-story space, approximately 20 feet by 60 feet. Its is notable for its vaulted beamed ceiling and Pompeian style mosaic tile floor. The center of the floor is sand-colored tile arranged in simple swirls. This neutral color and simple design forms a pleasing contrast with the colorful border pattern of alternating musical instruments and theater masks. Veined white marble wainscotting covers the lower two thirds of the walls above black marble baseboards. The wainscotting is terminated by a Greek wave band, above which the walls are covered with gold fabric. Alternating paired and single Roman Ionic pilasters with gilded capitals divide the wall surface into eight bays per side. Along one wall are several metal grates decorated with palmettes surrounded by a fret band. Along the elliptical vaulted ceiling, intricately carved wooden beams cross at right angles to form coffers filled with gold leaf paper. Two crystal chandeliers illuminate the space. Along the east wall, the ticket windows and a door are framed by entablatures of dark mahogany carved in a shell pattern at the heads. Carved pilasters frame the sides of the ticket widows. Along the south end of the vestibule, three sets of double doors lead into the lobby. Above each bay is a semi-circular arch decorated with a mural painting. Above the three arches, the lunette is also ornamented by a mural.

Lobby

The main lobby is a long, narrow, high ceiling space, nearly 100 feet long and 18 feet wide, with staircases at the northeast and southwest corners. The northeast stair is particularly notable for its heavy hand-cast bronze railing. The lobby is divided into ten bays on the south wall and eleven along the north, with Corinthian pilasters between bays. Except where there are doors or other openings, bays generally have intricately carved satinwood dado and large plate glass mirrors above, framed by gilded moldings which emphasize the rococo curves of the mirrors.

Along the south wall, the four double doors leading into the auditorium are of carved satinwood and glass with handsome plated handles. Above each door is a semi-circular arch enclosing a painted scenic medallion. Along the north wall are doors to the offices, cloak room, and ladies' lounge. Each door is of paneled satinwood with painted scenes above the surround.

The pilasters between the lobby bays support a frieze which alternates paired brackets and gilded representations of mandolins, flutes and theater hats. A cornice of two classical moldings is accented by shells placed above the frieze brackets. The vaulted ceiling is divided by a cross beam into two sections. The area nearest the vestibule is ornamented in the lunettes and along the vault by flower bouquets and leafy borders in pastel colors on a subdued gold background. A crystal chandelier hangs from a recessed ceiling medallion. Along the rest of the lobby, lunettes above the cornice at each bay are stenciled with geometrical and leafy diaper patterns on a gold-leaf background. The ceiling itself is divided into three scenes, each set within an elaborate gilded rococo frame. The three murals, in the style of Boucher, depict cherubs amid clouds. The lunette along the west side of this portion of the ceiling is painted with a pastoral scene. Lighting in the main lobby is provided by three-candle electric wall sconces which appear to be original and are located on each pilaster. The floor is covered by a plain red carpet.

Auditorium

The fan shaped auditorium seats 1,650 persons in an elegant setting which has been carefully maintained over the years. The plan features a sloping orchestra section and orchestra pit, two balconies supported on cast iron columns, and two tiers of wide single proscenium boxes. Predominant colors are a rich blue-green and gold with red accents. The outstanding decorative feature of the space is the mural painting.

The Proscenium arch is framed by gilded classical moldings, a palmette border and two massive two-story tan Sienna marble columns with gilded Ionic capitals. A large cartouche at top center is flanked by cherubs. Above the arch is a mural, in blue-green tones, of cherubs with festoons of flowers. The proscenium boxes are framed on the stage side by the same marble column which supports the proscenium arch and by a similar column on the auditorium side. Both boxes and balconies are decorated along the sides with rococo plaster cherubs and flourishes and have red velvet-covered railings with brass stanchions. Above the boxes on each side is a frieze and modillion cornice from which springs a semi-circular arch in which is set a sculptured group of three figures playing musical instruments.

The ceiling has a large central panel with a heavy frame, inside which is a central medallion measuring some 21 feet across. The medallion is painted with a band of figures on a stippled green ground, and from it hangs a magnificent crystal chandelier. At the four corners of the central panel are smaller circles, about nine feet in diameter, each decorated by a single large seated female figure painted in strong colors on a gold mosaic ground. (An explanation of the iconography by these figures is included in the architectural significance section.) Chandeliers hang from the front two small medallions and wall light bulbs encircle all four small medallions. The rest of the ceiling is painted with a background pattern of leafy swirls on a blue-green ground. Where the ceiling meets the walls, vaulted lunettes are ornamented with lyres.

The walls of the auditorium in both the orchestra and balcony areas have dark wainscotting which appears to be walnut. Above, the walls are stenciled in wine red on a pink background in a pattern which closely resembles damask cloth and gives the appearance of cloth from a distance. The wall treatment complements the crimson velvet drapes and railings in the boxes and plain crimson carpeting along the aisles. Original wall sconces are located on each side of doors leading to lobby areas.

Along the soffit of the first balcony are ribs which are decorated with a gilded twisted guilloche pattern. The area between ribs is painted pink. The soffit of the second balcony is treated in a similar but simplified manner.

Four pairs of cast iron columns with gilded Ionic capitals support the first balcony. These are placed near the aisles so as not to disturb sight lines. Six similar cast iron columns support the second balcony. Both balconies retain the original seats, which have cast metal sides and wooden arms.

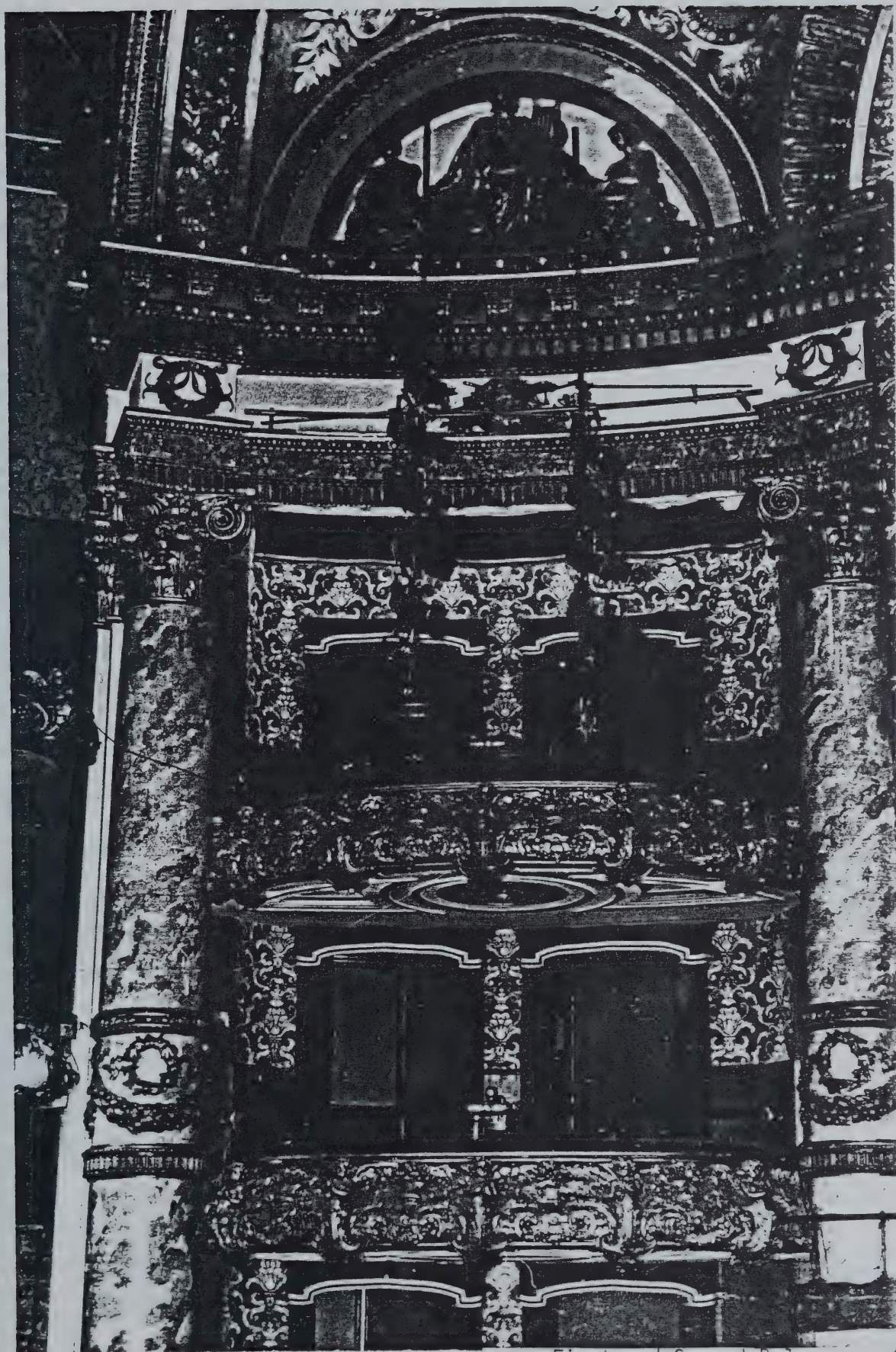
Outside the first balcony is a simply decorated promenade area with oak raised field paneled dado and a linoleum floor. The upper walls and ceiling are unadorned. Chandeliers here are not original. Outside the second balcony is an even more spartan upper level promenade with vertical oak board wainscotting, a linoleum floor and plain upper walls and ceiling. Off this promenade are small ladies' and men's rooms marked by their original signs. Original signs have been preserved in most of the theater as well.

The ladies' lounge off the main lobby has been called a "little Versailles" because of the quality of its rococo ornamentation in shades of blue, green and gold set off by gilding and satinwood wainscotting. The high-ceiling lounge is entered through a stilted, segmental arched doorway with double leaved four-panel satinwood doors carved with

festoons. The north wall is dominated by a carved grey marble fireplace with a mantle supported by carytid cherubs and a mirror above. A large oak trestle table with carved legs, originally from the men's lounge, sits in the middle of the room. The east and west walls are both divided into three bays by carved wooden Ionic columns.

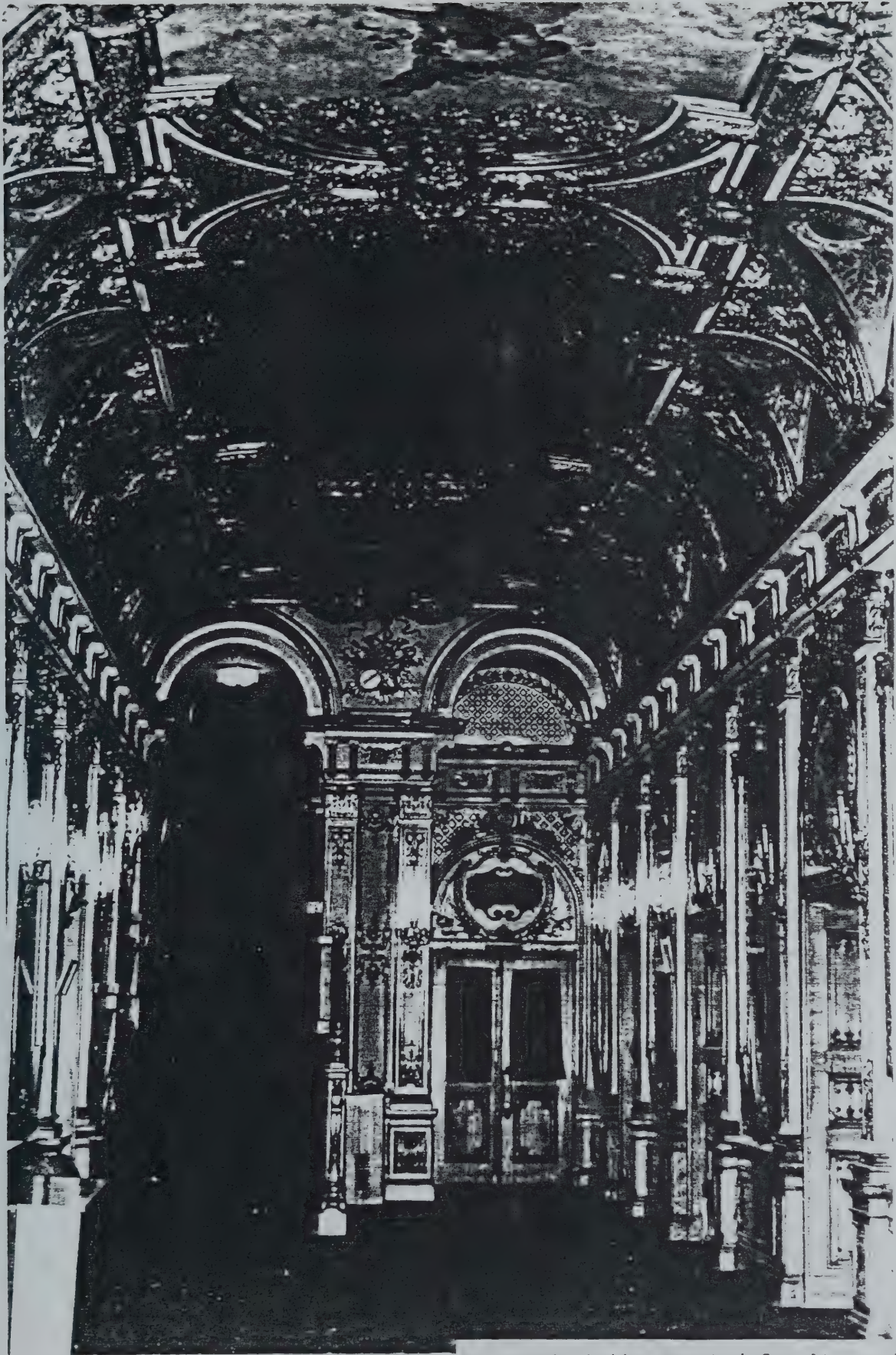
The center bays at both ends feature large mirrors and the side bays have two-panel doors set in stilted segmental arches. Above each door is a panel with a scenic painting in predominantly green small side medallions. The central medallion has a lighted, recessed area painted with cherubs and clouds. General room lighting is provided by bronze wall scones. The floor is covered by a blue rug of appropriate design. The bathroom off the lounge, entered from a doorway along the east wall, has been modernized.

The men's lounge or smoking room is located in the basement at the foot of the southwest staircase. The stairwell itself has oak wainscotting and oak doors, a brass railing, and stenciled designs along the walls. The smoker is a one-story room, virtually intact, with golden oak wainscotted walls and a mosaic tile floor with a simple geometrical border and off-white and scattered yellow tiles in the center. The ceiling is vaulted and presently is unadorned. Along the ceiling are three plaster medallions in the shape of cabbages from which hang two chandeliers. Along two sides of the room, oak benches are built into the wall. The bathroom itself, entered through swinging doors along the east wall, has been modernized.



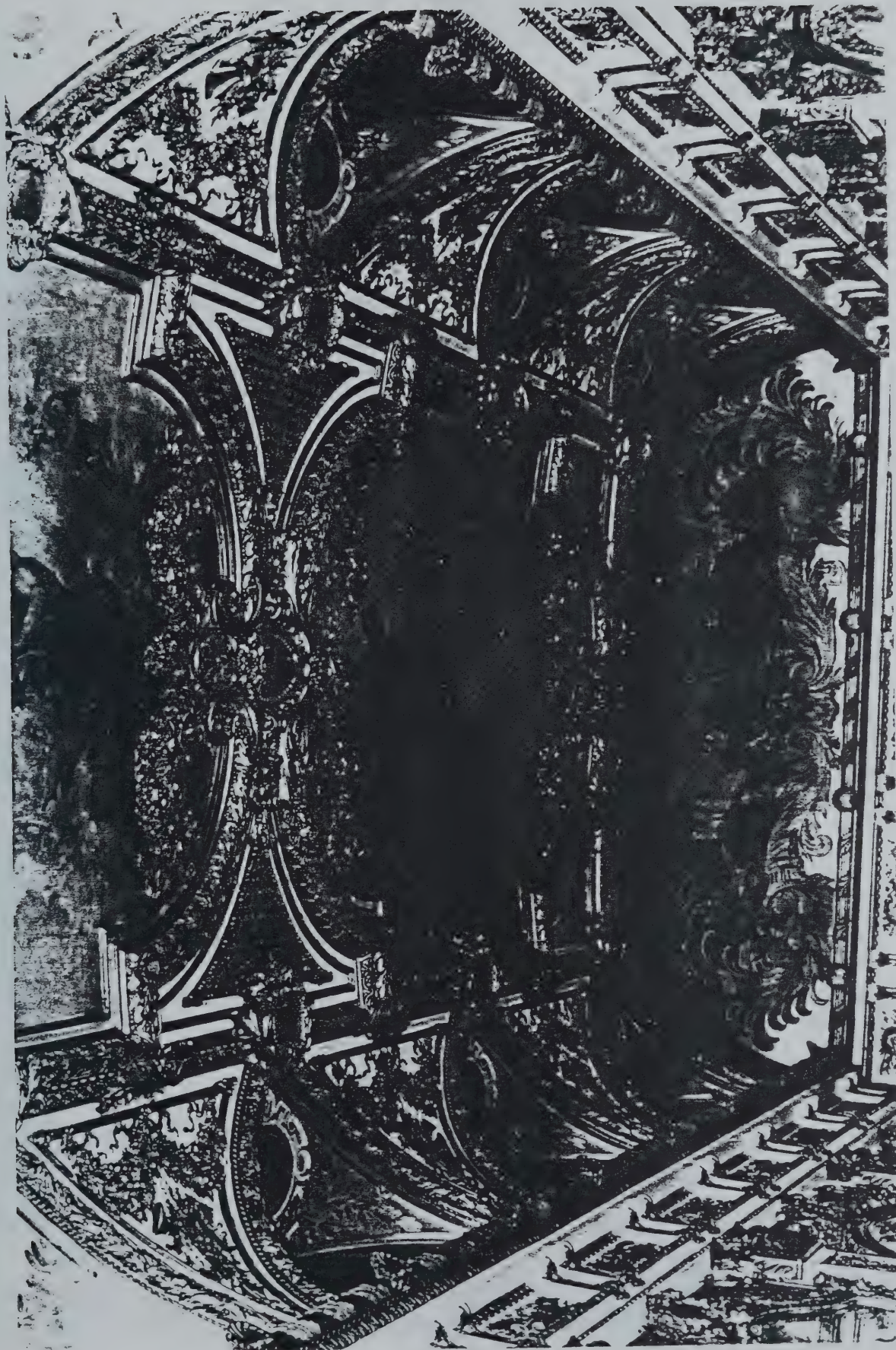
Colonial Theater
September 1983

First and Second Balcony : Cast iron
columns with gilded Ionic capitals support
these balconies.



Colonial Theater
September 1983

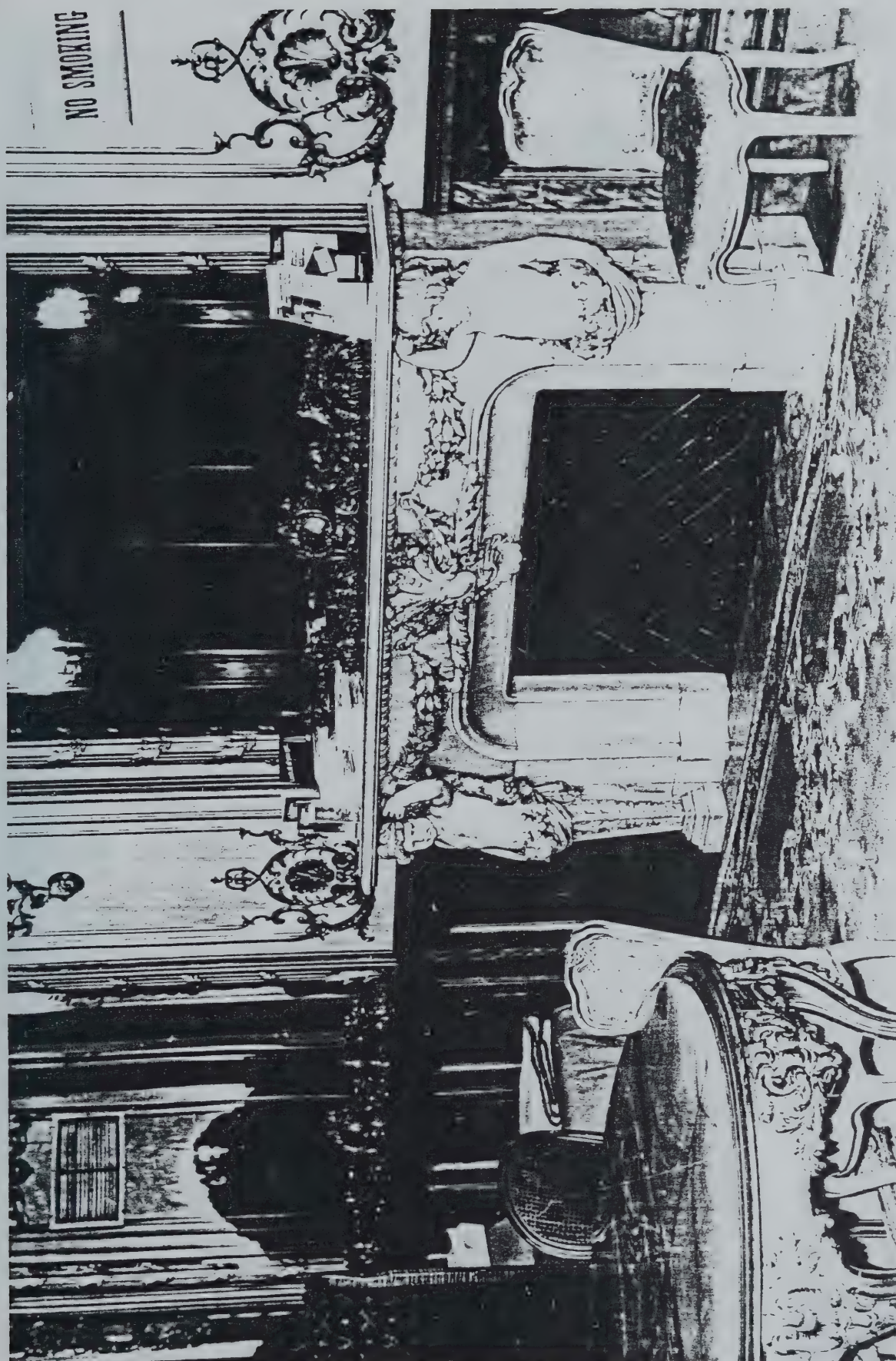
Main Lobby - noted for its vaulted beamed ceiling.



Main Lobby : A ceiling mural, in the style of Boucher, depicts cherubs amid clouds.

Colonial Theater
September 1983

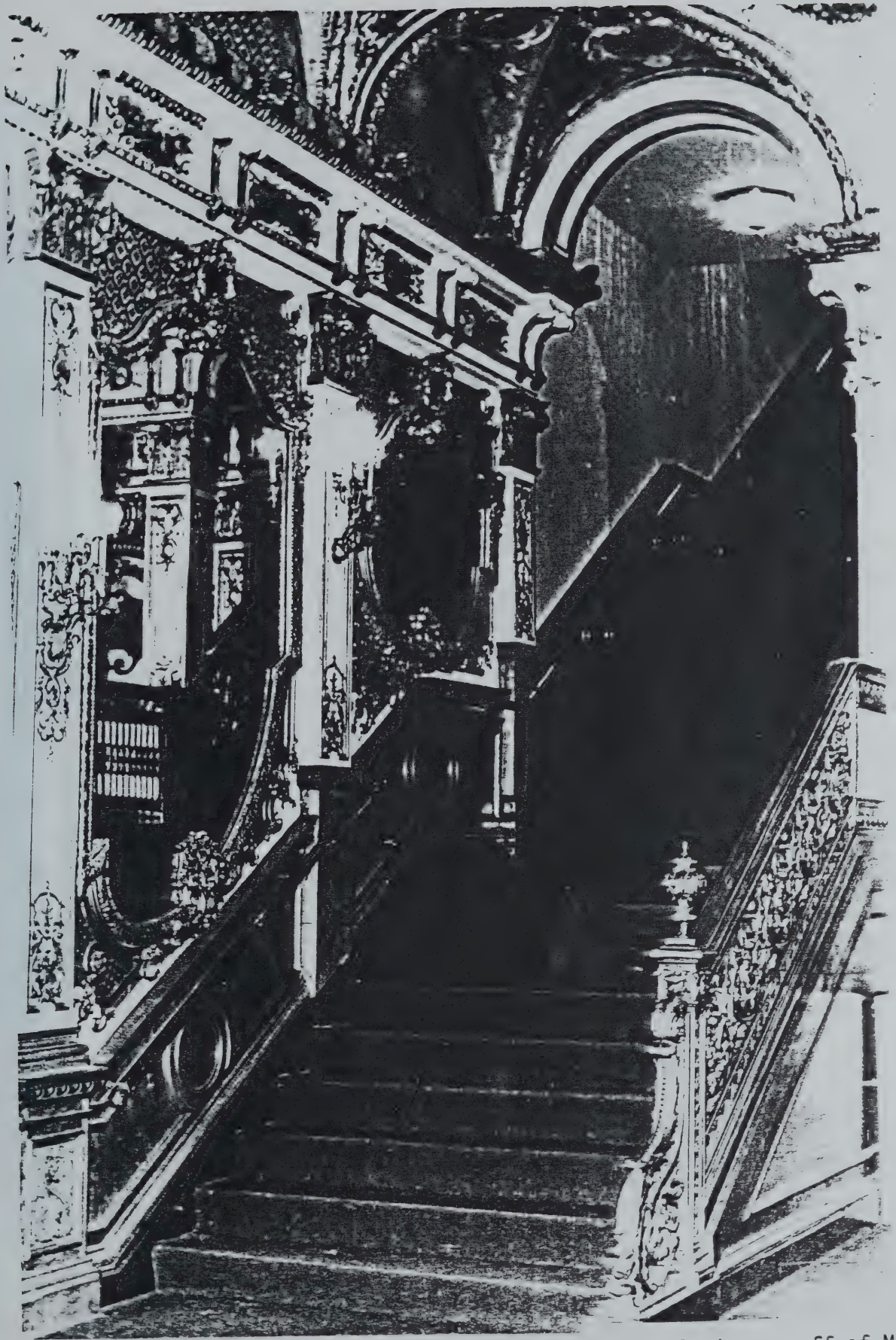
View of Ladies Lounge
Colonial Theater
September 1983





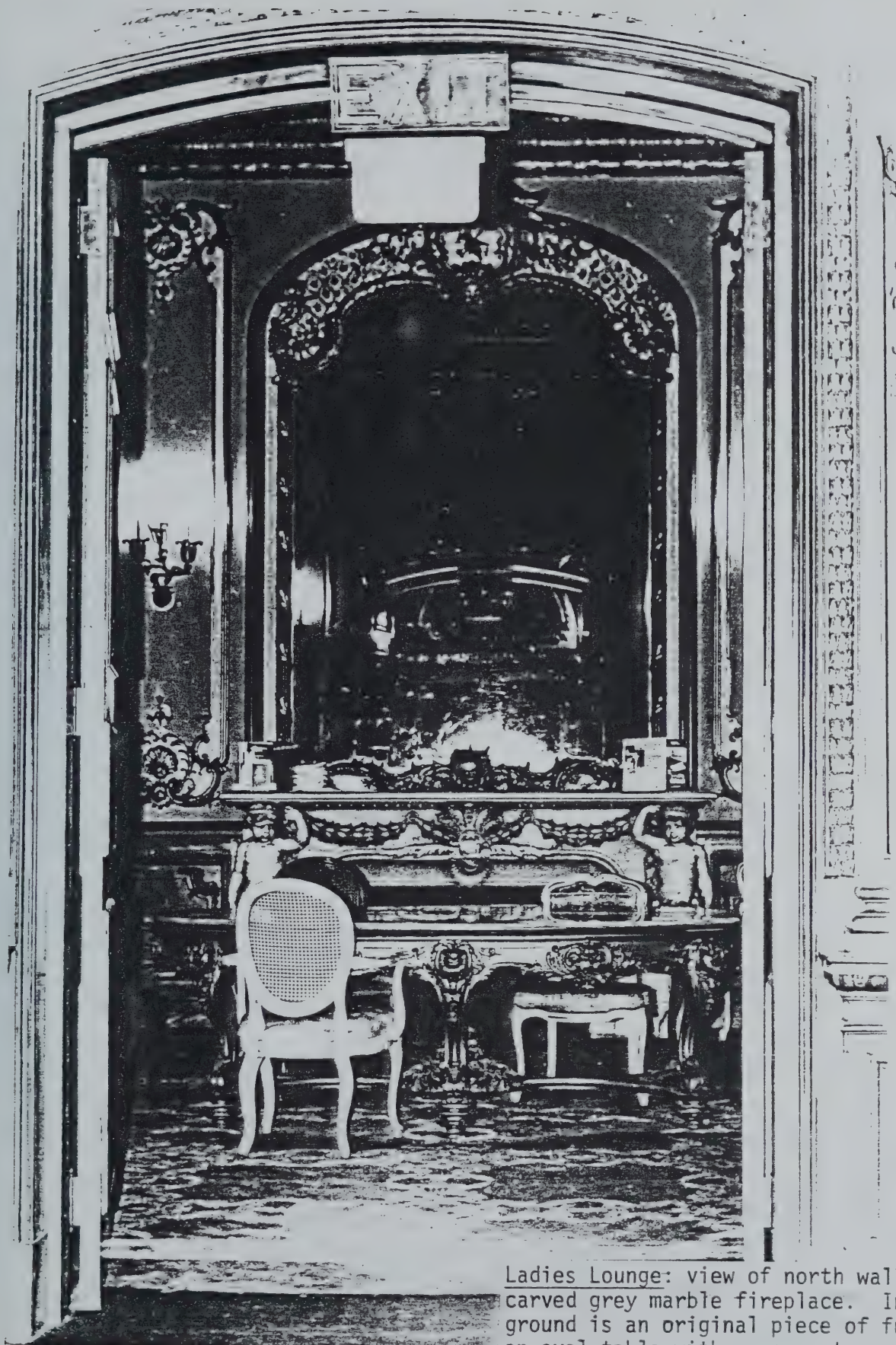
Main Lobby : A semi-circular arch
encloses a painted scenic medallion
above the doors on the south wall.

Colonial Theater
September 1983



Staircase off of Main Lobby

Colonial Theater
September 1983



Ladies Lounge: view of north wall with carved grey marble fireplace. In foreground is an original piece of furniture, an oval table with an onyx top and heavily carved, gilded base.

Colonial Theater
September 1983

3.0 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROPERTY

3.1 Summary of Historical Significance

The Colonial has been called "the premiere musical comedy theater in Boston" and has been associated over the years with some of the greatest theater personalities of the twentieth century.

The theater opened on December 20, 1900 with a spectacular production of "Ben Hur" featuring a chariot race with live horses galloping across the stage on a treadmill. The original managers, Issac B. Rich, Charles Frohman, and William Harris, were well-known in theater circles. The large stage, well-appointed dressing rooms and good production facilities quickly made the Colonial a favorite among producers.¹ Florenz Ziegfeld liked to open his shows there because few theaters could match its production capabilities. Ziegfeld is reported to have started his famous "Follies" at the Colonial in 1907.² Many of Rogers and Hammersteins's most popular shows tried out on this stage. Among the song writers and producers who worked at the Colonial over the years were Jerome Kern, Abraham Erlanger, Sigmund Romberg, Irving Berlin, George White, Richard Mansfield, and George M. Cohan. The many notable productions over the years have included Sir Lawrence Olivier in Jean Anouilh's "Becket" (1961), the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of Pinter's "The Homecoming" (1966), Nicol Williamson in "Hamlet," and Helen Hayes in O'Neill's "A Touch of the Poet" (1958).

In 1960 the theater was leased to the Jujamcyn Company, which restored it at a cost of \$1.5 million. The theater remained in the hands of the Jujamcyn Company until it was sold in 1981.

The Colonial Building was erected on the site of the first Boston Public Library Building (1885), which was razed to make way for the Colonial.

3.2 Summary of Architectural Significance

The Colonial Theater is of high architectural significance as the oldest theater to survive intact and as the masterpiece of Boston's best-known theater architect, Clarence H. Blackall. The rococo interior is considered by many to be the finest of any Boston theater.

The Colonial exemplifies the genius of Blackall in bringing together diverse architectural elements into a unified vision. For his inspiration, Blackall looked across the Atlantic. The vestibule floor is said to follow the style of a Pompeian mosaic in the Naples Museum. The main lobby ceiling is in the style of the Gallery of Apollo in the

Louvre. The auditorium has been described as "in the spirit of such historic structures as the Vatican, parts of St. Peters, and the Fairnese Palace."³ The ladies lounge, in the style of Louis XV, was appropriately furnished in the French style.

To enrich the interior further, the architect collaborated with architect/decorator H.B. Pennell on a series of murals which are unique among Boston Theaters. More than a half-dozen artists were brought in for this work. The main auditorium ceiling paintings were entrusted to H.T. Schladermundt of New York, an artist best known for his mosaic vaults at the Library of Congress. The centerpiece features a band of figures with three standing winged males representing "Tradition," "Truth," and "Inspiration," between which are pairs of figures representing the "Dances."⁴ The mural is painted broadly on a stippled ground formed with small dabs of emerald-green and yellow, giving the scene a luminous, atmospheric effect. The four corner circles represent the muses of "Epic Poetry," "History," "Tragedy," and "Comic or Pastoral Verse."⁵ The lobby ceiling paintings in the style of Boucher are the work of Newton A. Wells of the University of Illinois.⁶ Over the doorheads, the "Louis XV" landscapes in tones of green are by the Boston artist Victor Durando.⁷ The murals over the doors in the ladies lounge are by the well-regarded Cambridge artist Marion Peabody, while the center ceiling panel was painted by the otherwise unknown Mr. B. Tojetti.

To execute other parts of his design, Blackall obtained the services of some of the best-known craftsmen of his day. In a series of articles in American Architect and Building News, Blackall gives credit to those who helped carry out his vision.

The architect was particularly fortunate in having associated with him a corps of helpers who seemed to feel all the enthusiasm and interest in the problem and its practical execution which is so necessary to a successful realization of an architect's ideals.⁸

The excellence of the work is even more remarkable considering the fact that the construction of most of the building and theater took less than one year and the decoration of the theater itself less than two months.⁹

The general contractor, the Worcester-based firm of Norcross Brothers, is associated with many of Boston's most significant late 19th century structures. The younger brother, Orlando Whitney Norcross (1839-1920), has been called H.H. Richardson's "master builder" because of his expert execution of such buildings as Trinity Church, the Ames Building, and the Exchange Buildings in Boston, and the Marshal Field store in Chicago. After Richardson's death, the firm continued to construct major buildings throughout the United States for architects such as Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge; McKim, Mead and White; Peabody and Stearns; John Russel Pope, and others in the East and Midwest.

An article by James F. O'Gorman on Norcross Brothers describes the firm as "without question...among the most important construction companies in the country in the late 19th and early 20th centuries."¹²

Other fine craftsmen were brought in to execute elements of the design. The lavish carving detailed is the work of John Evans company, whose other Boston work includes the cut-stone detail at Trinity Church and much of the interior and exterior finish work at the Boston Public Library and All Saints Church in Ashmont.¹³ The woodwork is of satin wood, chosen, according to Blackall, because it "takes carving as cleanly and distinctly as box-wood and when selected for grain is very handsome."¹⁴ The wood is stained a strong yellow, which Blackall felt would have been excessive in daylight but glows under the effect of electric lights.

The ceiling in the main foyer is the work of Sleep, Elliot and King of Boston, who in the next year did the elaborate plaster work at the nearby Majestic Theater (presently the Emerson/Majestic). The bronze work, highlighted by the massive cast bronze lobby stair rail, was done in Brooklyn by Hecla Ironworks. Interior decoration of the theater was the work of H.B. Pennell, who later worked on the Majestic and Wilbur Theaters. In carrying out the work, Pennell was associated with the well-regarded Boston firm of L. Habberstroth & Son. Documentation on other contractors involved in the building is remarkably complete and can be found in the June 1, 1901 issue of The American Architect and Building News.

The opening of the Colonial was an event of considerable interest to the architectural profession. A series of five articles by Blackall in The American Architect included illustrations and floor plans and discussed in detail the construction, framing, heating, ventilation systems, sightlines, acoustics, lighting, fire prevention systems, curtain rigging, and other work specifications. Blackall gave a special tour of the new theater to members of the Boston Society of Architects, after which both Blackall and Pennell presented papers on the design at a meeting of the Society.¹⁵

These articles reveal Blackall's careful attention to technical detail. His success in creating a space which is usable and comfortable as well as handsome has been attested to by the high quality of productions which have played here over the years. The well-equipped stage and dressing rooms, suitable for everything from comedy to grand opera, have been attractive to producers and insured the theater's commercial as well as artistic success.

The Colonial is also remarkable for its excellent state of preservation. The theater was refurbished in 1960 at a cost of \$1.5 million, at which time some of the ceiling paintings were retouched and the spaces repainted in the spirit of the original. Original lighting fixtures and signage were

retained. Original seats remain in the balcony areas. Some original furniture has remained in place. Even the coat room retains its original vertical oak boarding.

The Colonial is often considered the best of approximately eighteen Boston theaters designed by the nationally known architect Clarence H. Blackall (1857-1942). It is an excellent example both of Blackall's eclectic aesthetic sense and facility with different styles and his ability to incorporate the latest in construction technology. Blackall was born and educated in New York and studied architecture at the University of Illinois and for three years at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. In the early 1880s, while in the employ of the distinguished Boston firm of Peabody and Stearns, Blackall became the first American student to win the Rotch Traveling Scholarship providing two years of travel and study in Europe. In 1889, he joined James F. Clapp and Charles A. Whittemore in organizing a firm with which he was associated for nearly half a century. Among the firm's important early commissions was the Bowdoin Square Theater. Over the years, Blackall was associated with the construction or remodelling of some nineteen Boston theaters, of which ten remain today. Of these, the most important are the Colonial, the Metropolitan (1925), and the Wilbur (1914), all of which have been recommended for designation as Boston Landmarks. The other remaining Boston theaters by Blackall are the Gaeity/Publix (1909), Modern (1914), Washington Street Olympia/Pilgrim (1912), Broadway Theater (South Boston, 1921), National Theater (South End, 1911), and Tremont Temple (1895).

With his partners, Blackall also designed a number of outstanding Boston commercial buildings including the Carter/Winthrop Building (1894), Boston's first steel frame skyscraper, and the Little Building (1917). He also served as consulting architect for the Copley Hotel.

Blackall's architectural writing and organization work made him a prominent member of the profession. He was an early member of the Boston Society of Architects and the American Institute of Architects. He was also one of the organizers and first president of the Boston Architectural Club, and a founder and first secretary of the Architectural Heritage League of New York. His contributions to professional journals included articles on architectural education, housing for the poor, theater laws and theater fires. He also served for a time as an editorial writer for Brickbuilder Magazine.

3.3 Relationship to Landmark Criteria

The Colonial Theater meets the criteria for Landmark designation, as defined in Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975:

- as a structure prominently identified with the cultural history of the City, the Commonwealth, and the New England Region;
- as a structure embodying the distinctive characteristics of the rococo style in theater decoration;
- as a notable work of a Boston architect who was nationally known as a designer of theaters.

4.0 ECONOMIC STATUS

4.1 Current Assessed Value

The total assessed value of parcel 45 in ward 5 is \$14,252,500. This assessment is for the entire Colonial Building. The assessed value of the land is \$3,503,500; and the assessed value of the building is \$10,649,000.

4.2 Current Ownership and Occupancy

The Colonial Building, including the theater, is owned by John Komola Trust.

5.0 PLANNING CONTEXT

5.1 Background

During the Colonial period, the present Theater District was a marshy, sparsely settled area outside the original town center and close to the neck -- the slender stem of land connecting the Shawmut peninsula to Roxbury and the mainland. Washington Street and Frogg Lane (now Boylston Street) were the principle public ways, and important landmarks included the Common, the Common Burying Ground (originally the South Burying Ground), established in 1754, and the Hollis Street Meeting House of 1732.

Because of its strategic location on the neck, the area's commercial importance increased during the early 19th century. The Bulfinch designed Boylston Market was constructed in 1810 at the corner of Boylston and Washington Streets to serve farmers bringing produce to market. The coming of the railroads during the 1830s and 1840s increased traffic in the Park Square area, where the Boston and Providence terminal was located, and in the newly filled South Cove area, location of the Boston and Worcester and Old Colony terminals. By mid-century the edge of the Common was becoming a favored location for large residential, commercial, and institutional structures such as the first Boston Public Library (1855), the Masonic Temple (1864) and the Hotel Pelham (1857), Boston's first "French flat" or apartment house.

By the turn of the century, the area south of the Common had begun to develop as a theater district. The third building of the Hollis Street Meeting House had been converted to a theater in 1885. This was followed by the construction of the Tremont Theater in 1889, the Colonial in 1900, the Majestic in 1903, the Shubert in 1910, the Wilbur in 1914, and the Metropolitan in 1925. The area has continued throughout the century to be characterized by a mix of small-scale retail and entertainment uses on the street level with office, residential, wholesale, and light manufacturing uses above -- a diversity which has its origins in the somewhat haphazard growth of the late 19th century city.

5.2 Current Planning Issues

Since March 1986, about two-thirds of the adult-oriented establishments in the theatre area have gone out of business or had their licenses revoked. None of the facilities has reopened in other parts of the city. By contrast, non-adult entertainment uses now outnumber the adult bookstores, movie theaters, peep shows and bars on lower Washington Street between Essex and Kneeland Streets, the block which was once the heart of the Combat Zone.

Planning for the Cultural District has focussed on several key parcels in the district, including the Hinge Block, the vacant parking lot next to the Shubert Theater (parcel C-4), the vacant lot next to the Wilbur Theater (P-7), the vacant parking lot on Hayward Place and the adjacent Lafayette Place Mall, and the parcel on Washington Street between Boylston and Avery Streets. In addition, planning for the district has focused on ways to revitalize two of the historic districts located within the cultural District: the Liberty Tr

The Midtown Cultural District Plan attempts to preserve the historic character of the area by protecting historic buildings, blocks, and street patterns; steering major development into areas that contain few historic structures; limiting building heights in areas with historic buildings; and promoting the renovation of historic buildings. Article 38, the Midtown Cultural District Zoning, states as its goals and objectives,

to direct downtown development in a way that promotes balanced growth for Boston; to prevent overdevelopment in the Financial District and the Back Bay by promoting mixed-use development on Midtown; to revitalize Midtown as the region's center for performing and visual arts by rehabilitating historic theaters and creating new cultural facilities for the city's nonprofit arts community; to protect the quality of life and provide for expansion of the thriving Chinatown neighborhood by creating affordable housing and business opportunities, and by controlling institutional expansion in the area; to preserve Boston's historic resources and public open spaces, which provide enjoyment to all residents and visitors and which increase land values in their proximity, by virtue of historic, aesthetic, and environmentally beneficial qualities; to provide new and expanded facilities for community services; and to create a new residential neighborhood downtown by encouraging the development of housing which is affordable to all segments of the community.

This zoning creates Planned Development Areas, Protection Areas, the Hinge Block Special Study Area, and a Housing Priority Area. The Protection Areas were established to protect public open spaces or residential neighborhoods abutting the protection areas, or the concentration of historic buildings within the protection areas.

The Colonial Building, which houses the Colonial Theater is within the Boston Common and Public Garden Protection Area.

Any portion of a Proposed Project within the Boston Common and Public Garden Protection Area is limited to FARs of eight (8); provided that such a Proposed Project shall have an as-of-right FAR of ten (10), if such Proposed Project is subject to or shall elect to comply with the provisions of Article 31, Development Review Requirements, and the Boston Redevelopment Authority has certified that the Proposed Project complies with Article 31.

With regard to height restrictions in this protection area, the following applies to the Colonial Building.

...any portion of a Proposed Project within 100 feet of the nearest street line of any street described below are limited to the building height specified for such street as follows:

- c. Boylston Street from Tamworth Street to Park Square: 130 feet maximum height.

Public hearings were held on October 25, 1983 and on May 14, 1985 on the potential designation of the Colonial Theatre. The Landmarks Commission took no action following either hearing.

6.0 ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

6.1 Alternatives

The Commission has the option of designating the major interior spaces as a Landmark. The Commission also retains the option of not designating the interior of this building as a Landmark.

The Colonial Theater is currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Piano Row District which was submitted in the fall of 1980 as part of the Theater Area Multiple Resource nomination.

6.2 Impact of Alternatives

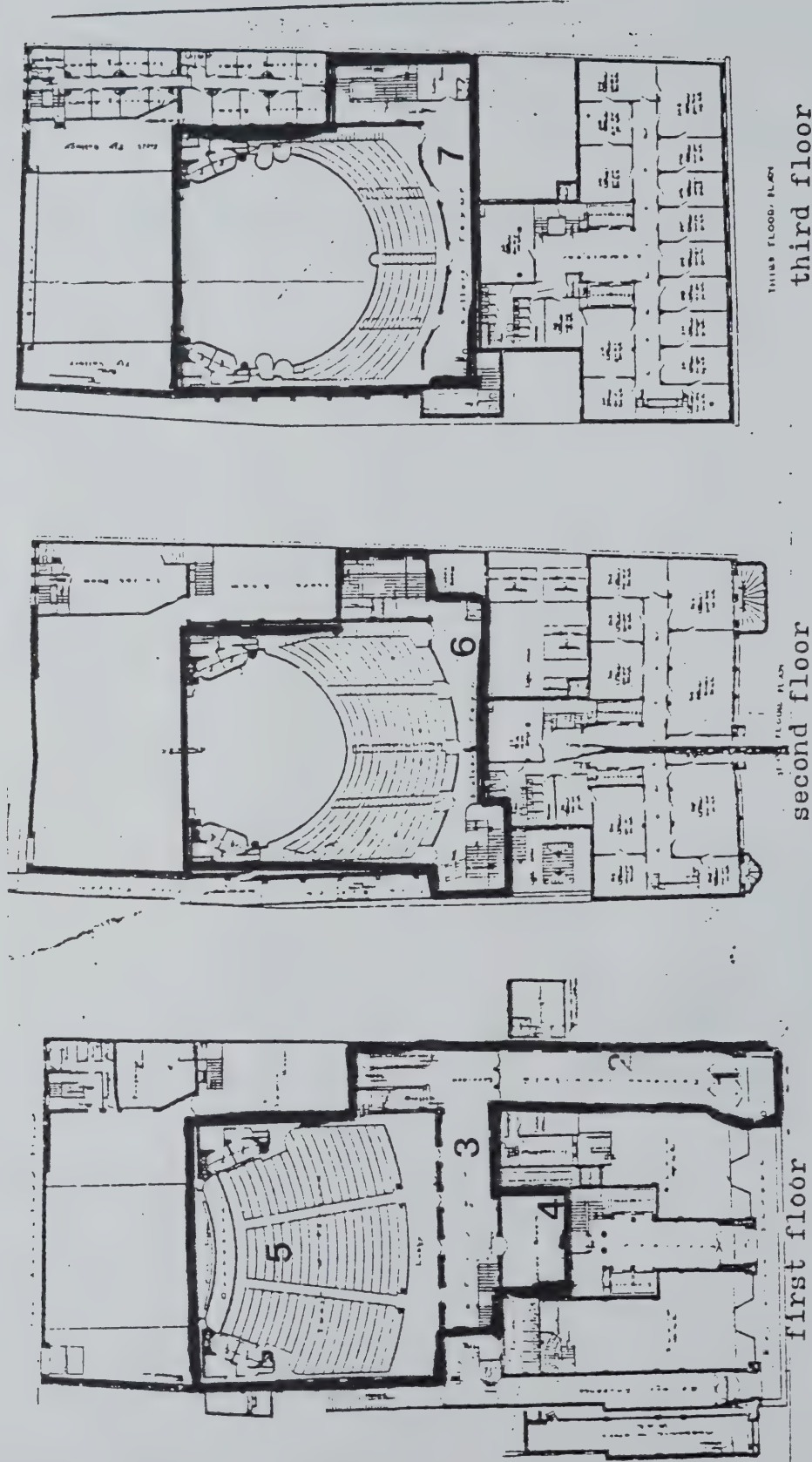
Landmark designation under Chapter 772 would require the review of physical changes to the designated interior spaces of the Colonial Theater in accordance with the standards and criteria adopted as part of the designation.

Listing on the National Register of Historic Places would provide protection through the Section 106 Review process whenever federal, federally licensed, or federally assisted actions are undertaken. Similar protection from state sponsored activities is achieved by concurrent listing of all National Register properties on the State Register of Historic Places under Chapter 254, General Laws of Massachusetts.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission recommends that the interior of the Colonial Theater be designated a Landmark under Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975, as amended. Recommended for inclusion in the designation are the outer vestibule, main vestibule, lobby (including the full height of the double stairway and the staircase to the mezzanine), ladies' lounge, auditorium (including the boxes and their hallways, stairs and anterooms), and the mezzanine and balcony promenades.

The Standards and Criteria recommended for administering the regulatory functions provided for in Chapter 772 are attached.



Plans for Colonial Theatre (C.H. Blackall, arch) from American Architect and Building News, April 13, 1901, vol. 72, #1320.

1. outer vestibule
2. main vestibule
3. lobby (including full height of double stair)
4. ladies' lounge
5. auditorium
6. first balcony promenade
7. second balcony promenade

Colonial Theater
106 Boylston Street
Areas Recommended for
Designation

8.0 GENERAL STANDARDS & CRITERIA

8.1 Introductory Statement on Standards and Criteria to be used in Evaluating Applications for Certificates

Per sections 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 of the enabling statute (Chapter 772 of the Acts of the 1975 of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts) Standards and Criteria must be adopted for each Landmark Designation which shall be applied by the Commission in evaluating proposed changes to the property. Before a Certificate of Design Approval or Certificate of Exemption can be issued for such changes, the changes must be reviewed by the Commission with regard to their conformance to the purposes of the statute.

The Standards and Criteria established thus note those features which must be conserved and/or enhanced to maintain the viability of the Landmark Designation.

The intent of these guidelines is to help local officials, designers, and individual property owners to identify the characteristics that have led to designation, and thus to identify the limitation to the changes that can be made to them. It should be emphasized that conformance to the Standards and Criteria alone does not necessarily insure approval, nor are they absolute, but any request for variance from them must demonstrate the reasons for, and advantages gained by, such variance. The Commission's Certificate of Design Approval is only granted after careful review of each application and public hearing, in accordance with the statute.

As intended by the statute a wide variety of buildings and features are included within the area open to Landmark Designation, and an equally wide range exists in the latitude allowed for change. Some properties of truly exceptional architectural and/or historical value will permit only the most minor modifications, while for some others the Commission encourages changes and additions with a contemporary approach, consistent with the properties' existing features and changed uses.

In general, the intent of the Standards and Criteria is to preserve existing qualities that cause designation of a property; however, in some cases they have been so structured as to encourage the removal of additions that have lessened the integrity of the property.

It is recognized that changes will be required in designated properties for a wide variety of reasons, not all of which are under the complete control of the Commission or the owners. Primary examples are:

- (a) Building code conformance and safety requirements.
- (b) Changes necessitated by the introduction of modern mechanical and electrical systems.
- (c) Changes due to proposed new uses of a property.

The response to these requirements may, in some cases, present conflicts with the Standards and Criteria for a particular property. The Commission's evaluation of an application will be based upon the degree to which such changes are in harmony with the character of the property.

In some cases, priorities have been assigned within the Standards and Criteria as an aid to property owners in identifying the most critical design features.

The Standards and Criteria have been divided into two levels: (1) those general ones that are common to almost all landmark designations (subdivided into categories for buildings and landscape features); and (2) those specific ones that apply to each particular property that is designated. In every case the Specific Standard and Criteria for a particular property shall take precedence over the General ones if there is a conflict.

8.2 GENERAL STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

A. APPROACH

1. The design approach to the property should begin with the premise that the features of historical and architectural significance described within the Study Report must be preserved. In general this will minimize the exterior alterations that will be allowed.
2. Changes to the property and its environment which have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history of the property and the neighborhood. These changes to the property may have developed significance in their own right, and this significance should be recognized and respected. ("Later integral features" shall be the term used to convey this concept.)
3. Deteriorated material or architectural features, whenever possible, should be repaired rather than replaced or removed.
4. When replacement of architectural features is necessary it should be based on physical or documentary evidence of original or later integral features.
5. New materials should, whenever possible, match the material being replaced in physical properties, design, color texture and other visual qualities. The use of imitation replacement materials is generally discouraged.
6. New additions or alterations should not disrupt the essential form and integrity of the property and should be compatible with the size, scale, color, material and character of the property and its environment.
7. Contemporary design is encouraged for new additions; thus, they must not necessarily be imitative of an earlier style or period.
8. New additions or alterations should be done in such a way that if they were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property would be unimpaired.
9. Priority shall be given to those portions of the property which are visible from public ways or which it can be reasonably inferred may be in the future.

10. Color will be considered as part of specific standards and criteria that apply to a particular property.

B. EXTERIOR WALLS

I. MASONRY

1. Retain whenever possible, original masonry and mortar.
2. Duplicate original mortar in composition, color, texture, joint size, joint profile and method of application.
3. Repair and replace deteriorated masonry with material which matches as closely as possible.
4. When necessary to clean masonry, use gentlest method possible. Do not sandblast. Doing so changes the visual quality of the material and accelerates deterioration. Test patches should always be carried out well in advance of cleaning (including exposure to all seasons if possible).
5. Avoid applying waterproofing or water repellent coating to masonry, unless required to solve a specific problem. Such coatings can accelerate deterioration.
6. In general, do not paint masonry surfaces. Painting masonry surfaces will be considered only when there is documentary evidence that this treatment was used at some point in the history of the property.

II. NON-MASONRY

1. Retain and repair original or later integral material whenever possible.
2. Retain and repair, when necessary, deteriorated material with material that matches.

C. ROOFS

1. Preserve the integrity of the original or later integral roof shape.
2. Retain original roof covering whenever possible.
3. Whenever possible, replace deteriorated roof covering with material which matches the old in composition, size, shape, color, texture, and installation detail.
4. Preserve architectural features which give the roof its character, such as cornices, gutters, iron filligree, cupolas, dormers, brackets.

D. WINDOWS AND DOORS

1. Retain original and later integral door and window openings where they exist. Do not enlarge or reduce door and window openings for the purpose of fitting stock window sash or doors, or air conditioners.
2. Whenever possible, repair and retain original or later integral window elements such as sash, lintels, sills, architraves, glass, shutters and other decorations and hardware. When replacement of materials or elements is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.
3. On some properties consideration will be given to changing from the original window details to other expressions such as to a minimal anonymous treatment by the use of a single light, when consideration of cost, energy conservation or appropriateness override the desire for historical accuracy. In such cases, consideration must be given to the resulting effect on the interior as well as the exterior of the building.

E. PORCHES, STEPS AND EXTERIOR ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS

1. Retain and repair porches and steps that are original or later integral features including such items as railings, balusters, columns, posts, brackets, roofs, ironwork, benches, fountains, statues and decorative items.

F. SIGNS, MARQUEES AND AWNINGS

1. Signs, marquees and awnings integral to the building ornamentation or architectural detailing shall be retained where necessary.
2. New signs, marquees and awnings shall not detract from the essential form of the building nor obscure its architectural features.
3. New signs, marquees, awnings shall be of a size and material compatible with the building and its current use.
4. Signs, marquees and awnings applied to the building shall be applied in such a way that they could be removed without damaging the building.
5. All signs added to the building shall be part of one system of design, or reflect a design concept appropriate to the communication intent.

6. Lettering forms or typeface will be evaluated for the specific use intended, but generally shall either be contemporary or relate to the period of the building or its later integral features.
7. Lighting of signs will be evaluated for the specific use intended, but generally illumination of a sign shall not dominate illumination of the building.
8. The foregoing notwithstanding, signs are viewed as the most appropriate vehicle for imaginative and creative expression, especially in structures being reused for purpose different from the original, and it is not the Commission's intent to stifle a creative approach to signage.

G. PENTHOUSES

1. The objective of preserving the integrity of the original or later integral roof shape shall provide the basic criteria in judging whether a penthouse can be added to a roof. Height of a building, prominence of roof form, and visibility shall govern whether a penthouse will be approved.
2. Minimizing or eliminating the visual impact of the penthouse is the general objective and the following guidelines shall be followed:
 - (a) Location shall be selected where the penthouse is not visible from the street or adjacent buildings; setbacks shall be utilized.
 - (b) Overall height or other dimensions shall be kept to a point where the penthouse is not seen from the street or adjacent buildings.
 - (c) Exterior treatment shall relate to the materials, color and texture of the building or to other materials integral to the period and character of the building, typically used for appendages.
 - (d) Openings in a penthouse shall relate to the building in proportion, type and size of opening, wherever visually apparent.

H. LANDSCAPE FEATURES

1. The general intent is to preserve the existing or later integral landscape features that enhance the landmark property.

2. It is recognized that often the environment surrounding the property has character, scale and street pattern quite different from that existing when the building was constructed. Thus, changes must frequently be made to accommodate the new condition, and the landscape treatment can be seen as a transition feature between the landmark and its new surroundings.
3. The existing landforms of the site shall not be altered unless shown to be necessary for maintenance of the landmark or site. Additional landforms shall only be considered if they will not obscure the exterior of the landmark.
4. Original layout and materials of the walks, steps, and paved areas should be maintained. Consideration will be given to alterations if it can be shown that better site circulation is necessary and that the alterations will improve this without altering the integrity of the landmark.
5. Existing healthy plant materials should be maintained as long as possible. New plant materials should be added on a schedule that will assure a continuity in the original landscape design and its later adaptations.
6. Maintenance of, removal of, and additions to plant materials should consider maintaining existing vistas of the landmark.

I. EXTERIOR LIGHTING

1. There are three aspects of lighting related to the exterior of the building:
 - (a) Lighting fixtures as appurtenances to the building or elements or architectural ornamentation.
 - (b) Quality of illumination on building exterior.
 - (c) Interior lighting as seen from the exterior.
2. Wherever integral to the building, original lighting fixtures shall be retained. Supplementary illumination may be added where appropriate to the current use of the building.
3. New lighting shall conform to any of the following approaches as appropriate to the building and to the current or projected use:

- (a) Accurate representation of the original period, based on physical or documentary evidence.
 - (b) Retention or restoration of fixtures which date from an interim installation and which are considered to be appropriate to the building and use.
 - (c) New lighting fixtures which are contemporary in design and which illuminate the exterior of the building in a way which renders it visible at night and compatible with its environment.
- 4. If a fixture is to be replaced, the new exterior lighting shall be located where intended in the original design. If supplementary lighting is added, the new location shall fulfill the functional intent of the current use without obscuring the building form or architectural detailing.
 - 5. Interior lighting shall only be reviewed when its character has a significant effect on the exterior of the building; that is, when the view of the illuminated fixtures themselves, or the quality and color of the light they produce, is clearly visible through the exterior fenestration.

J. REMOVAL OF LATER ADDITIONS AND ALTERATIONS

- 1. Each property will be separately studied to determine if later additions and alterations can, or should, be removed. It is not possible to provide one general guideline.
- 2. Factors that will be considered include:
 - (a) Compatibility with the original property's integrity in scale, materials and character.
 - (b) Historic association with the property.
 - (c) Quality in the design and execution of the addition.
 - (d) Functional usefulness.

9.0 Specific Standards and Criteria

A. INTENT

The intent of these guidelines is to preserve the visual character of the theater which is virtually intact. The Commission encourages continued maintenance of the Colonial and suggests that any required replacements or additions be faithful to the original design insofar as possible. If any major restoration or construction activity, or work on sensitive or significant features of the theater is considered, the Boston Landmarks Commission recommends that the proponents prepare an historic building conservation study and/or consult a materials conservator early in the planning process. The Commission has no intention to interfere with temporary alterations to the configuration of the stage and orchestra seating such as a thrust stage, ramps, cabaret seating or screening to block off seats or sections of the theater which may be required by certain productions. As a result, none of these standards and criteria is intended to interfere with ongoing theater productions, and such temporary alterations are therefore exempt from prior Commission review and approval. Temporary is defined as one year or less. The Commission encourages continued restoration of the interior to the maximum extent possible and recognizes the need to make sympathetic change.

B. LEVELS OF REVIEW*

The Commission has no desire to interfere with the normal maintenance procedures of the Colonial Theater. In order to provide some guidance for the theater management and the Commission, the activities which might be construed as causing an alteration to the physical character of the theater have been categorized into:

1. Routine activities which are not subject to review by the Commission:-

- * Maintenance activities associated with routine housekeeping.
- * Routine activities associated with theater production that do not result in any permanent alterations or attached fixtures.
- * Changing of posters or announcements in existing display boxes.
- * Back Stage service areas area not under review.

**This section is an addition to standards and criteria developed in the October 4, 1983 study report developed for this property.*

2. Activities which may be determined by the Executive Director to be eligible for a Certificate of Exemption: only ordinary maintenance and repair involving no change in design, material, color and outward appearance, including such items as,

- * Major cleaning programs (including chemical surface cleaning).
- * Re-upholstering.
- * Re-carpeting.
- * In-kind replacement or repair.
- * Maintenance or repair of the marquee and display boxes.

3. Activities requiring Landmark Commission review: any reconstruction, restoration, exterior or interior replacement or alteration or demolition, such as,

- * New construction of any type or removal of any existing features or elements shall require review by the Landmarks Commission. This includes but is not limited to seating; ornament; fixtures; surface treatments; or any alteration involving change in design, material, color, location, or outward appearance.

4. Activities not explicitly listed above:

In the case of any activity not explicitly covered in these Standards and Criteria, the Executive Director shall determine whether an application is required and if so, whether it shall be an application for a Certificate of Design Approval or Certificate of Exemption.

C. THEATER ENTRANCE

The following features are part of the entrance to the Colonial and are integral to the theater's appearance.

1. Doors

The existing doors shall be retained. If replacement, changes shall match original in material, composition, scale, and shape.

Existing leaded glass transom windows shall be retained. All repairs will be reviewed.

2. Display Systems

The two display boxes shall be retained. Any alteration will be subject to review and approval. Changing of displays does not require review.

3. Marquee

The existing marquee is not original, but does represent a later alteration which has gained significance. Any proposed changes require review.

4. Lighting

Any additional entrance lighting shall be reviewed by the Commission.

D. INTERIOR

Included in the designation are the outer vestibule, main vestibule, lobby (including the double stairway and the staircase to the mezzanine), ladies' lounge, auditorium (including the boxes and their hallways, stairs and anterooms), and the mezzanine and balcony promenades. All work within these spaces is subject to review. The Commission encourages restoration of the interior to the maximum extent possible and recognizes the need to make sympathetic changes.

1. Volume

The full unobstructed volume and spacial relationships of the designated interior spaces shall be maintained. New openings and new framing down or closing of existing openings will not be allowed.

2. Finishes

All materials and finishes within the designated spaces shall be retained. If replacement is necessary, changes shall match original in material, composition, texture, and appearance. No original surface material shall be removed, altered, or covered. Cleaning of interior surfaces shall be completed using the gentlest methods possible.

- a. Natural wood surfaces shall not be painted, and if new finishes are proposed they should match original.
- b. Paint seriation studies, to determine original paint colors, are recommended if color changes to painted surfaces are anticipated. All murals and stenciling shall be retained.
- c. The mosaic floor in the main vestibule shall be retained. Carpeting and wall coverings should match or evoke the design of the original or the period.
- d. All decorative ceiling detail shall be retained. Repairs shall match original in composition, scale, materials and appearance.
- e. Textured plaster wall surfaces, such as those in the auditorium space, shall be retained. Repairs shall match original in texture, composition and appearance.
- f. Mirrors and mirrored surfaces shall be retained.

- g. Metal surfaces and detail shall be retained; if replacement is necessary changes should match original in material, design, finish, and appearance.
3. Seating
Whenever possible, existing seating shall be retained. If necessary, replacement house seating should match original in arrangement and general appearance. Seats on the mezzanine level best represent seating of the period and may be used as a model for replacement designs on all levels.
4. Doors
The interior doors shall be retained. If replacement is necessary, new doors should match the original in composition, materials, shape, size, finish, and appearance.
6. Hardware
All hardware shall be retained; if replacement is necessary, changes shall match original in materials, design, finish, and appearance.
7. Stair Railings
All stair railings shall be retained; if replacement is necessary, all changes shall match original in materials, design, finish, and appearance.
8. Lighting
Original lighting fixtures exist throughout the interior, including the candelabrum, chandeliers, and must be retained. Any required replacements should match the original in materials, design, finish, and appearance. Any required, supplemental house lighting should be sympathetic to color and quality of original and should not mimic the original in design.
9. Theater Equipment
Equipment which is integral to the function of the theater and does not damage the interior may be installed without review. Items which permanently affect the appearance of the designated spaces will be reviewed by the Commission. These items include, but are not limited to, the fire screen, curtain, sound booth, and any other permanent fixtures.
10. The men's lounge, and the back entrance and rear stair which lead to the balcony are intact spaces that are integral to the theater; these spaces are not included in the designation, however, the Commission encourages their retention.

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10.1 FOOTNOTES

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15. Tucci, op. cit.



June 5, 1990

Boston Landmarks Commission

**City of Boston
The Environment
Department**

Boston City Hall/Room 805
Boston, Massachusetts 02201
617/725-3850

Ms. Janice Chadbourne
Fine Arts Department
Boston Public Library
Copley Square Branch
Boston, MA 02116

Dear Ms. Chadbourne:

The Boston Landmarks Commission is considering the possible designation of the interiors of the following as a landmarks: The Colonial Theater, 106 Boylston Street, and the Wang Center, 268 Tremont Street, Boston.

The Commission has scheduled a public hearing for Tuesday, June 26, 1990 at 5:15 p.m., in the BRA Board Room, 9th Floor, Boston City Hall.

The Commission has also prepared, with the assistance of its staff, study reports on the significance of each property, and other factors pertaining to the property which the Commission will consider in making its determination on designation.

The Commission hereby requests that you make available for use by the public, at the Library, the enclosed copies of the reports on the proposed designations.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

Judith B. McDonough
Executive Director
Boston Landmarks Commission
Environment Department

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